



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

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OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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Statement by OPM Secretary Ben Barnes Clarifies Issues With Arts Funding

I would like to clarify any misunderstandings about the proposal to change the way the State funds arts organizations.

Let me be clear, the proposed budget does not eliminate funding for arts organizations.

Our goals in making these changes are simple – we want to create a system that demands accountability standards and sets performance benchmarks for organizations that receive state money. The current system of simply allocating an earmark does not do that. It does not ask the organization to disclose how that money is being spent, how much the funding provided by the state contributes to the entirety of that organization's budget or how many people take part in a given exhibit or event.

The system we want to work toward will demand that accountability, and the competitive nature by which the grants will be allocated could in fact increase funding for some groups. And just as importantly, it will let taxpayers know that their hard earned dollars are going to worthwhile projects that enrich their lives and make Connecticut a more attractive place to live and to visit – projects that truly rely on state funding.

We are asking for sacrifices from groups across the spectrum, including many state agencies. I believe these are reasonable asks for any group that receives state money during these incredibly challenging fiscal times.

Coming from local government, I appreciate that some arts and cultural organizations depend on the earmarked state grants and that they build their budgets around it. We appreciate their need for continuity of funding. To that end, the Department of Economic and Community Development will develop a phase-in approach for funding in FY 2013 that guarantees existing earmark recipients will receive 80% of the allocation they received the prior year, with the remainder being allocated on competitive basis. Commissioner Smith will provide more details in March about that process.

In addition, we will work with the legislature to segregate funding for arts and cultural organizations from the tourism marketing account in order to clarify our objective that this funding be used to support arts organizations.

This administration has a strong track record of negotiating on contentious issues, including the state budget. We are always willing to discuss our proposals with advocates for the arts and look forward to a solution that will meet our goals while maintaining important cultural institutions.

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